

 SUN INVESTIGATES

Balto. Co. schools facing new scrutiny on contracts

Many technology purchases were made without competitive bidding

By **DOUG DONOVAN AND LIZ BOWIE**
The Baltimore Sun

From the moment Dallas Dance launched his digital overhaul of Baltimore County public schools in 2012, the former superintendent recommended hundreds of millions of dollars in contracts to education technology firms from across the nation. Many of the purchases were made without competitive bidding. Discovery Education's no-bid contract is worth

\$10 million. DreamBox Learning and Curriculum Associates both have no-bid deals worth \$3.2 million. And Code To The Future has a nearly \$1 million no-bid contract.

Other than being Baltimore County school contractors, the four companies share another common feature: They are clients of Education Research & Development Institute.

The Chicago-based firm, also called ERDI, sets up private, three-hour meetings at conferences See **CONTRACTS**, page 9



KARL MERTON FERRON/
BALTIMORE SUN

Verletta White, Baltimore County's interim school superintendent, and her predecessor, Dallas Dance, were on ERDI's paid roster of consultants.

State lawsuit attacks Trump

Lawyers: President's business ties violate the Constitution

By **JOHN FRITZE**
The Baltimore Sun

WASHINGTON – Attorneys for the State of Maryland told a federal court Thursday that the state has been harmed by payments President Donald J. Trump's real estate company receives from foreign governments and other states, and that those transactions violate one of the nation's earliest efforts to combat corruption.

The arguments, which spanned most of the day in U.S. District Court in Greenbelt, focused on a narrow but crucial question in a lawsuit filed by Maryland and the District of Columbia in June: whether those two jurisdictions are positioned to claim the payments made to Trump's hotels are unconstitutional.

Central to the lawsuit is the idea that the Trump International Hotel in downtown Washington is sucking business from hotel and convention centers in Maryland and the District — particularly among foreign diplomats, but also among other states that have booked the Trump property while on business in the nation's capital.

Steven M. Sullivan, Maryland's solicitor general, told the court the state had been harmed because its hotels and restaurants could not possibly compete with a hotel owned by the president for customers seeking to curry favor with the White House.

He pointed to a visit last year by Maine Gov. Paul LePage. LePage stayed at the hotel; later, Sullivan said, the Trump administration agreed to a LePage request to ease logging restrictions at a national monument in his state. See **SUIT**, page 11



KIM HAIRSTON/BALTIMORE SUN PHOTOS

Gov. Larry Hogan holds a news conference Thursday about his plan to return extra state revenue produced by changes in federal tax law to Maryland taxpayers. With him is Kelly M. Schulz, secretary of labor, licensing and regulation.

Comptroller issues warning about taxes

U.S. changes could cost Marylanders \$400M, Franchot report says

By **SCOTT DANCE**
The Baltimore Sun

Unless state leaders step in, more than a quarter of Maryland taxpayers will owe more in state and local taxes because of the federal income tax cuts — a cost of more than \$400 million next year, according to an analysis unveiled Thursday by Comptroller Peter Franchot.

Hours later, Gov. Larry Hogan released his plan to return the unexpected windfall to taxpayers, largely by allowing Marylanders to take the newly increased standard deduction on their federal taxes while still itemizing deductions on their state tax returns.

Franchot's report will play a crucial role as the Republican governor works with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to attempt to insulate Maryland residents from a huge, inadvertent state tax hike. General Assembly Democrats proposed



Comptroller Peter Franchot takes questions about his report on the federal tax changes, which he said could cost Maryland taxpayers more than \$400 million.

their own set of solutions last week.

The comptroller's detailed analysis adds clarity to the fuzzy calculations that lawmakers have been using since President Donald J. Trump signed the \$1.5

trillion tax cut into law Dec. 22. The earlier estimates had been dire, suggesting that Marylanders' state tax bills could grow by as much as \$1 billion if state leaders did not adjust tax laws, as they have pledged to do.

Franchot's report says the federal reforms would not affect about 69 percent of Maryland state tax bills, while increasing 28 percent and lowering 4 percent of bills. Meanwhile, more than 70 percent of Marylanders are expected to see an average of \$1,700 in cuts to their federal tax bills — a total savings of \$2.8 billion for state taxpayers.

Factors likely to determine how an individual taxpayer might be affected include whether they have children, whether they typically itemize their deductions, and whether they have business income or losses.

"Every taxpayer needs to examine their situation," said Andrew Schaufele, director See **TAXES**, page 11

SUMMARY OF THE NEWS



GERHARD WEBER/AP

Early ancestor

Upper left jaw and teeth from a fossil found in Israel indicate that modern humans left Africa as much as 100,000 years earlier than previously thought. **NEWS PG 6**

MARYLAND

REBUKED: The General Assembly's ethics committee found that a Baltimore delegate "breached the standards of conduct expected of a member" of the legislature in an angry outburst at an advocate for a nonprofit group. **NEWS PG 2**

NATION & WORLD

TRUMP AND MUELLER: President Donald Trump reportedly ordered special counsel Robert Mueller fired in June but was dissuaded by the White House counsel, who threatened to resign if the president insisted that he carry out the order. **NEWS PG 4**

TODAY'S WEATHER

SUNNY AND MILD

48 **32**
HIGH LOW

Sunny on Saturday **SPORTS PG 14**

Trial hears of more crimes by city police

Gun Trace Task Force was warned of investigations, former detective says

By **JUSTIN FENTON**
The Baltimore Sun

Shawn Whiting had large stacks of cash spread throughout his bedroom when Baltimore police came crashing in one morning in January 2014: \$8,000 from his job as a house painter — and nearly \$16,000 he acknowledged was from selling cocaine.



Former Detective Maurice Ward testified Thursday that a "source" in the internal affairs unit told task force members they were being investigated.

But when Whiting received a letter after his arrest outlining how much had been seized, it showed just \$7,650. Whiting immediately called the internal affairs unit to report the theft.

"If you steal candy from the store, you're

going to keep doing it," Whiting, 52, testified Thursday in U.S. District Court.

Four years later, Detective Marcus Taylor is on trial for that robbery and four others, charged with Detective Daniel Hersl with being part of a racketeering conspiracy as members of the Police Department's Gun Trace Task Force.

Earlier, Detective Maurice Ward — another task force member, who has pleaded guilty in the case — testified that Taylor found the money in Whiting's closet, asked Ward to "look out for him" and they split \$3,000.

Whiting's contacts with internal affairs See **TASK FORCE**, page 11